

Aspiration, Hope, Dissent: The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis as a Temporary Autonomous Zone

By Vali Mahlouji

“The philosopher, as a necessary man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has always found himself, and always had to find himself, in opposition to his today...”ⁱ
- Nietzsche

“One of the distinctive virtues of modernism is that it leaves its questions echoing in the air long after the questioners themselves, and their answers, have left the scene.”ⁱⁱ
- Marshall Berman

Introduction

Speculation abounds regarding the invisibility of collections hidden from the public by institutions and individuals alike. Removed from cultural circulation, it is less frequent that such works are intentionally relegated to unceasing slumber. When such collections are displayed for the public, a simultaneous opening up of potentiality, audience and creative engagement is implicated. Yet, what if the collection or the artwork no longer exists in the conventional sense of a tangible art object? What if the object was ephemeral, with all records of its existence buried under a mythological façade of epic exaggeration and unwarranted demonisation? Such was the fate of the *Jašn-e Honar-e Shiraz* or The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, a ground-breaking international festival of performing arts held annually in Iran every summer between 1967 – 1977, in and around the city of Shiraz and the ancient ruins of Persepolis. The intellectual drive behind the festival, its modus operandi, as well as its aesthetic content constitute a highly enduring, contested space despite the passage of a half a century, reflecting the festival’s complex nature. This stands in contrast to most other concurrent pre-revolutionary cultural initiatives, like the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA), which have been retrospectively endorsed and validated by artists and cultural practitioners who have inherited their material and intellectual assets. Given the recent opening up of TMoCA’s internationally significant art collection to a public audience (albeit outside of Iran), it is even more important to

re-examine and reconsider the festival's artwork and to reintegrate that material into cultural memory and discourse.

Parallel Realities of the Festival and TMOCA

The festival shares an intimate history with TMOCA. Both represent compelling international pinnacles of a widespread cultural infrastructural policy from the pre-revolutionary moment; materials related to both endeavours have remained out of cultural circulation for the most part since 1979. Unlike the artwork currently on loan from TMOCA at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, however, the cultural object produced by The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis was transitory and immaterial. A dual reality is at play here. The festival's artefact materialised distinctively as a transitory experience that was shared by an ephemeral and temporary community of participants — actors and spectators. The artefact is *absent* beyond its occurrence, its artistic status embedded in its aestheticism, contained within its particular *eventness*.ⁱⁱⁱ This abstraction and immateriality renders the cultural capital essentially non-commodifiable, in direct contrast to TMOCA's repository of actual, material, and commercial capital. Today and for posterity, TMOCA's material presence consolidates and affirms both its visionary stride and its cultural capital, while the festival's transitory space of cultural negotiations remains obscure (fig. 1).

This current research, and the unearthing of the archives, coincides with a contemporary surge of interest in focusing attention on historical gaps and lacunae across all cultures and disciplines.^{iv} Institutions expand to incorporate alternative narratives and *modernities of the elsewhere*.^v Simultaneously, invigorated art historical interests in performing art forms can be observed, particularly with regard to institutional re-stagings and re-tracings of twentieth century performances and happenings.^{vi} Performing the archive of the festival constitutes more than a recirculation of a document: this re-presentation unearths a potential, an atmosphere charged with desires, aspirations, shared hopes, rages and resistances — *a substance infrastructure* — as much as it captures a historical moment in shared global history.^{vii}

The Emergence of the Object

The festival emerged in the context of an expansive, systematic, cultural policy during the 1960s and 70s, which established numerous public museums, cultural institutions, the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT), networks of exhibitions, festivals, centres of education, archival documentation, research, development, and dissemination, including the lauded *Kanoon-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-e Koudakan va Nojavanan* (Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults).

The inaugural performance was staged on 11 September 1967 and the final one on 26 August 1977. A small coalition of like-minded Iranian cultural practitioners masterminded the festival. Leading this group was Reza Ghotbi, director of the newly founded NIRT, who sought the collaboration of Farrokh Ghaffari, who had returned from la Cinémathèque française in Paris, and Khojasteh Kia, who was educated at the Old Vic and led the theatre research at the NIRT in its initial stage. Many other cultural practitioners were intimately involved with the organisation of the festival, including Sheherazade Afshar, Bijan Saffari, Hormoz Farhat, and Fouzieh Majd.

Stimulation and Oxygenation of Local Reality

As articulated extensively in the first catalogue published in 1969, two primary aims were clearly identified within the local context: first, to allow local artists to share a platform with other cultures, and second, to oxygenate isolated local traditions through stimulating exposure and confrontation, especially by situating the local in relation to Asia.^{viii}

‘The activity of the Festival has a two-way effect. It is designed to bring international artists into an inspirational setting, and at the same time expose creative Iranians to the cultural currents of other countries. The accent is on stimulation — whether it be from the profundity of tradition or the genius of innovation.’^{ix}

— 8th Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme (1974)

Interviews conducted with the younger generation of festivalgoers — both performers and spectators — attest to the unique opportunities for growth, experience, exchange, and exposure,

which the festival provided.^x This exposure fuelled innovation locally and, crucially, linked a new wave of Iranian artists with international networks. A striking example was the *Kargah-e Namayesh* or Theatre Workshop (1969 – 1978) — a collective of Iranian writers, actors, directors, and designers that constituted an important forerunner of contemporary experimentation. Two seminal *Kargah* productions premiered in 1968: *Pazhouheshi zharf va setorg va no dar sangvareha-ye dowre-e bist-o-panjom-e zamin shenasi (A Modern, Profound, and Important Research into the Fossils of the 25th Geological Era)* by Abbas Nalbandian and *Shahr-e Qesseh (City of Tales)* by Bijan Mofid. Scores of Iranian theatre talent performed, such as actors Parviz Sayyad, Ezzatollah Entezami, and writer-directors Bahram Beyzai and Ali Nasirian. A fledgling Iranian cinema found a platform, which afforded Iranian filmmakers such as Parviz Kimiavi, Nasser Taghvai, Fereydoun Rahnema, Dariush Mehrjui, and Arby Ovanessian visibility alongside recognized *auteurs*, such as Yasujiro Ozu, Ingmar Bergman, Luis Bunuel, Sergei Paradjanov, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Satyajit Ray and Marguerite Duras, and effectively initiated these Iranian artists' entry onto the international scene (fig. 2).

Iranian artists and productions comprised the largest group represented on stage (with Indian productions occupying second place in terms of the sheer number of performances). Approximately one fifth of the events presented over the eleven years were devoted solely to Iranian music: classical/traditional, regional, and folk — by far the most performed genre during the decade of events. Contemporary performance artists such as Reza Abdo, Sussan Deyhim, Susan Taslimi, Shohreh Aghdashlou, Mohammed-Bagher Ghaffari, Attila Pessyani, to name a few, belong to the next generation whose artistic development benefited from such exposure.^{xi}

The festival's creativity, however, was not always easily received:

The Sixth Festival was considered by many to be the most 'difficult' to date. [...] There was little appeal to 'popular' taste, a sure sign that the Festival organizers now knew what they wanted and were prepared to present it regardless of critical comment, which was not slow in coming. The controversy that boiled over in normally placid Shiraz was rightly considered part of what the Festival is all about, and as a welcome stimulus to artistic creativity and art criticism in Iran.^{xii}

In the face of opposition, the festival essentially adopted a Faustian motto — a quest for experience, mastery, and knowledge, and a disavowal of the status quo. It chose to embrace and contain *developmentally necessary* cultural controversy, despite and even in opposition to popular tastes and consumption. This avant-garde curatorial direction amounted to what Julia Kristeva calls a disturbance of ‘orderings of subject and society alike’, putting ‘subject-hood in trouble’,^{xiii} exposing it to a form of crisis in order (borrowing from Hal Foster) ‘to register its points not only of breakdown but of breakthrough’.^{xiv} Thus, the festival articulated, via crisis, the possibility of transformation.

Creative Transnational Exchanges Across Fault-lines

Transnationally, the curatorial approach mediated connections beyond concrete ideological, economic, and political fault lines. It operated against a backdrop of Cold War polarities, scars of the Vietnam War, European movements of 1968, military dictatorships in Southern Europe, the transformative surge of decolonization across nations in Asia and Africa, notwithstanding the greatly influential Algerian revolution of independence, and sentiments incited by the revolutionary militia movements in Cuba and elsewhere. The festival directors were well aware of these complexities and consciously responded to their influence.^{xv}

As a post-colonial stage, over three quarters of the total three hundred and eleven events (an approximate figure traceable thus far) were devoted to productions from the developing world: from West Asia, Central Asia, East and South-East Asia, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and South America. Local Iranian artistic productions shared a stage with the likes of Ravi Shankar, Yehudi Menuhin, Ram Narayan, Bismillah Khan, and Indian *kathakali* performers, as well as a wide array of artists (in many cases commissioned by the festival) ranging from Tadeusz Kantor, Joseph Chaikin, Robert Wilson (who was commissioned to create early epic performances such as *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia Terrace*), Maurice Bejart, Iannis Xenakis (who had fled the Greek junta), Olivier Messiaen, to Robert Suramaga, and Núria Espert (who found relative freedom in Shiraz, away from the dictatorial constraints of Francoist Spain).^{xvi} Many, such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, found the Iranian sphere’s lack of cultural baggage conducive to

facilitating and mediating encounters, in contrast to the uneasy dialogues with their audiences at home.

Unification and Universalism through Sound

The directors at Shiraz-Persepolis identified and tapped into a repository where non-European expressions were highly developed, in order to exercise an anti-hegemonic, democratizing, global attitude in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation. This was actualised in the third year, 1969, around the theme of *Percussion*. As the most fundamental ingredient to all music, rhythm signified a return to basics and resonated with elemental, instinctual drives. This theme allowed for a fluid programming — one that included: traditional Iranian *naqareh-khaneh* and *zurkhaneh* music, the Rwanda Drum Ensemble, Balinese *gamelan* concerts, Iranian masters Jamshid Shemirani, Hossein Tehrani (*tombak*), and Faramarz Payvar (*santur*), American jazz percussionist Max Roach, and French/Greek experimental musician Iannis Xenakis with a site-specific commission *Persephassa*. The festival not only placed expressions from non-European and Euro-American traditions on the map as valid and equal, but it also actualised a utopian direction, articulating notions of unification and universalism through sound.

Nativist Modernisers and Ritualising Modernists

These trajectories were successfully articulated the following year through the theme of *Theatre and Ritual*, 1970, intersecting various archaic, ‘primitive’, and primordial rituals with contemporary avant-garde experiments. Striving for authenticity, modernisers from the ‘third world’ were keen to base their investigations on native rituals, traditions, and folklores. This process of discovery, deconstruction, and reorientation found a natural ally in the internationally fluid and subversive avant-garde, who sought a break from the constraints and stabilities of its own traditions, in some instances, turning to investigations of ritual (fig. 3).

‘With the recent involvement of the Third World, a new perspective has been opened... World theatre seems even closer to achieving the goals set by the visionary Artaud... An

important trend of the avant-garde is devoted to developing this kind of expression for an intercultural audience'.^{xvii}

— 8th Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme, 1974

These experimental productions promised the release of universal ecstatic powers and insight into the unconscious world of the collective, on the basis that it brought theatre closer to its essence. Ideals of catharsis and a connection with the emotional core of drama were unifying underlying drives. Furthermore, the performative, represented by the 'primitive', supplanted the textual, or European tradition. A wide range of expressions included: influential Polish creator Jerzy Grotowski with Calderon's *The Constant Prince*; an adaptation of Gorgani's verse *Vis-o-Ramin*, by Mahin Tajadod and director Arby Ovanessian; Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes* by director Victor Garcia and Teatro Núria Espert; *Fire*, by Bread & Puppet Theatre directed by Peter Schumann; *ta'zieh of Moslem ibn Aqeel*.

“Ritual theatre” was the theme of the Fourth Festival, an appropriate choice, since Asia still remains a rich storehouse of ritual and ceremony, and, after a long period of lack of interest, the West is once again rediscovering its roots in Asian arts. Shiraz was the ideal meeting place for the purpose'.^{xviii}

— 8th Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme, 1974

The experiences of *Theatre and Ritual* at the fourth festival informed the creation of the seminal, site-specific, 1971 commission *Orghast* by directors Peter Brook, Arby Ovanessian, Andrei Serban, Geoffrey Reeves, poet Ted Hughes, and dramaturg/linguist Mahin Tajaddod. Its performers hailed from Iran, Cameroon, England, France, Japan, Mali, Portugal, Spain, and the United States. Tajaddod and Hughes invented a language, itself called *Orghast*, based on Middle Persian Avestan and ancient Greek. Incomprehensible to the modern audience, its primary intention was the omission of text as the carrier of symbolic meaning. This was consciously in line with Antonin Artaud's thesis as laid out by Jacques Derrida, whereby 'the logical and discursive intentions which speech ordinarily uses in order to ensure its rational transparency' are subordinated 'to purloin [the theatre's] body in the direction of meaning'.^{xix} Attainment of

meaning would transcend the need for rational discourse and bring the audience to alternate modes of consciousness, forming a new community ‘beyond any fixed, stable identity’^{xx} (fig. 4).

‘The point was to create a precise but open and inviting language... a language belonging below the levels where differences appear, close to the inner life of what we’ve chosen as our material, but expressive to all people, powerfully, truly, precisely’.^{xxi}

A Reverse Transmission of Knowledge

With the sixth year, 1972, programming aligned three important experimental practitioners with non-European traditions to which they were indebted. John Cage had studied with Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, a theologian of Zen Buddhism. Together with Cunningham, they drew inspiration from the ancient Chinese divination text *I Ching (The Book of Changes)* to explore notions of chance and indeterminacy and, ultimately, to break away from narrative and compositional conventions. Karlheinz Stockhausen’s compositions aimed at reaching a state of inner asceticism and spirituality correlating with philosophies of Hinduism. Importantly, the curating underscored the reverse transmission of knowledge from the so-called periphery to the centre, highlighting the depth and continuity of Asian philosophical influence on Europe (fig. 5).

Our societies have been evolving in recent years under the shadow of the technologically dynamic West. Our cultures are becoming recast in a new crucible. The impact of the West is a force we must contend with. Our responses to it should well be witnessed, both for the mutual edification of non-Western countries, through which we can study precedents and solutions in reasserting our age-old cultural heritages, and for the interest of Western artists, who might draw inspiration from the perspectives of other cultural arenas.^{xxii}

— 8th Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme, 1974

A Panoramic View of World Culture: The Case of Africa

The affirmation of indigenous traditions and sensibilities of Asia, especially China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and various African impulses directly responded to ‘third world’ emancipatory movements in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation. A new, post-colonial generation of African dramatists, including the well-known Duro Lapidó, drew upon indigenous traditions and mythologies. These investigations were focused on national revivalist drives within an intercultural dialogue, which resonated with the direction of the festival. Artists from Senegal, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda — countries which all gained independence in the early 1960s — represented ritual and contemporary cultural expressions. Ballet National du Sénégal participated in 1970, and L’Ensemble Lyrique du Sénégal in 1976. Duro Lapidó’s famous opera *Oba Ko So* — a dramatisation of the Yoruba story of Shango, King of Thunder — was staged in 1973. The festival implicitly entered into an intercultural dialogue with contemporaneous African platforms, most notably the World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar (1966) and the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers (1969). It is important to note that the regional, nativist, or ethnographic nature and purposes of these festivals do appear to contrast with the inclusive, *panoramic* view of world culture as articulated at Shiraz-Persepolis. The latter more explicitly set out to provide opportunities for juxtapositional complementarity between cultures — *a utopian unity of disunities* (fig. 6).

Retracing the Archive

Reinserting the artwork back into the centre of critical enquiry has been essential for retracing the actual object and deciphering the complex areas of obscurity and polemical contestation. In a vacuum of records, data, and archives, a gap has been left in scholarship, while mythologies have shrouded and mutated to epic proportions. A close study of the content elucidates a distinctly sophisticated, complex, and revolutionising stage which is immediately at odds with previously accepted scripts that have condemned the festival as a decadent space of elitist *gharbzadegi* (*westoxification*), a bourgeois project from above, an unengaged space of aesthetic formalism, reducing the entire project to ‘the wrong act, at the wrong time, in the wrong place.’^{xxiii}

The festival's terrain was an obviously vulnerable one — intellectually and logistically — not only for its *own* controversially pioneering missions to destabilise hegemonic hierarchies of culture, deconstruct geo-political binaries of 'first' and 'third' world, spatio-temporal, aesthetic and conceptual denominations of archaic/traditional and contemporary. Local and international historical contingencies presented enormous and often contradictory obstacles and challenges. To mount the festival on the international scale was not only unusual for the time, but it was also colossally ambitious in terms of basic logistics. Assembling artists from across the divides, for example, was not simply a curatorial choice. It often had to be approved by foreign offices and intelligence services on all sides. Perhaps the most striking achievement — in light of these logistical, pragmatic challenges — was its insistence on maintaining an egalitarian ethos while shifting the centre of gravity of cultural production and politics towards the re-emerging other. Contrary to claims, if there were an economy of prestige considered to be at play in this sphere of cultural negotiations, it would actually be most safely positioned amongst the forces of the peripheral, the 'third world', the dissenting, the unorthodox, the counter-cultures, the outsiders — all of those that contemporary scholarship strives today to incorporate into its canon (fig. 7).

The Contested Space

Locally, the festival's ethos appears incongruously correlated with the Iranian political realities of the time — a radicalised, politically frustrated space, rife with dogmas and intoxicated with scepticism.^{xxiv} First, under the open-minded sponsorship of NIRT, it operated as a *liberal space* across political restrictions, beyond the remit of the ministry of culture and politically imposed red lines. The festival's progressive curatorial policies were well beyond the understanding of the censor's conventional definitions; its artistic content was not under the censor's direct control. Its autonomy quickly became a thorn in the side of the zealously paranoid state security and intelligence service, SAVAK, which considered the festival an opportunity for dissenting artistic expression, a play with fire. SAVAK would often readily undermine the festival's credibility, in spite of its royal endorsement through the patronage of the *Shahbanou*,^{xxv} Farah Diba, instigating antagonism towards the festival from within the state apparatus.^{xxvi} Second, sizeable circles from the intellectual polity — particularly those on the left — failed to engage with the project's cosmopolitan, universalising world view, while the festival, in turn, failed to directly respond to

the more dogmatic, political discourses that dominated much of the intellectual community.^{xxvii} The festival would be best recognised as functioning meta-politically, as a *temporary autonomous zone* developing its own political and spatio-temporal set of values and parameters of expression and encounter beyond and outside of the conventional realities of its time.^{xxviii}

Controversy and contestation were detrimentally heightened by the fact that at Shiraz-Persepolis, the artwork itself was not only potentially subversive, as live performance inherently can be, but also more importantly, that it was optimistically and democratically spread across the open landscape and cityscape (from shrines to streets, archaeological ruins to gardens and the bazaar), unprotected and over-exposed to the uninitiated. By its own admission, the festival had boldly set out to challenge, not conform. Its playing field was not insulated within institutional walls, unlike TMOCA's safeguarded collection. Instead, the festival was more immediately, intimately linked to life, as performance is. Its artistic material — music, dance, drama, and storytelling — was itself fundamentally indigenous to all cultures, to all historical eras, to all peoples.

© Vali Mahlouji, London, October 2016

ⁱ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Judith Norman, edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 2002, §212

ⁱⁱ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: New York (Verso) 2010, p. 21

ⁱⁱⁱ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* London (Routledge) 2005, p. 25

^{iv} Retracing the archives forms part of an ongoing research and curatorial platform entitled *Archaeology of the Final Decade*. For further reading, see Vali Mahlouji, 'Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting', in *Iran Modern*, Fereshteh Daftari and Layla S. Diba (eds.), New Haven (Asia Society Museum/Yale University Press) 2013; also Vali Mahlouji, *The Contested Space: The Metapolitics of The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis*, in *Unedited History, Iran 1960 – 2014*, Paris (Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris) 2014; and Rome (MAXXI museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo) 2014

^v See a proliferation of institutional exhibitions of works by non-Western artists in London, Paris, New York, for example *Modernités Plurielles de 1905 à 1970* at Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

^{vi} Recently articulated in the theoretical and curatorial vogue for a 'relational aesthetics', institutions have looked to incorporate practices from outside the art museum during the twentieth century, especially ephemeral performances and events. This resonates with interest in the role of the audience as constituting part of the artwork itself, or its activation. The Tanks at Tate Modern are one example of a museum space dedicated to performance.

^{vii} Substance infrastructure here expands beyond the notion of infrastructures of knowledge *and systems of statements* generated by displacement of the object through time and place as discussed by Michel Foucault; see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, London (Routledge) 2002. It resonates with the conceiving of infrastructures as 'sites of affect and contradiction', as articulated at Bergen Assembly 2016 in 'Archives of Substance', which featured the *Archaeology of the Final Decade* exhibition *A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis*.

^{viii} 'A Report from the First Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis: Why Was the Festival Founded?', *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1967 – 68 – 69*, Tehran (Sekkeh Printing House) 1969. This was the first annual programme published; the years 1967 and 1968 did not have a published programme.

^{ix} *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1974*, Tehran (NIRT) 1974, p. 7.

^x Author's interviews with Iranian artists Sussan Taslimi, Mohammad Bagher Ghaffari, Iraj Anvar, Shohreh Aghdashlou, Saddreddin Zahed, Attila Pessyani, Sussan Deyhim, Shahram Karimi, Shoja Azari, and many others.

^{xi} Mohammad-Bagher Ghaffari, Shohreh Aghdashlou, Susan Taslimi were all linked to the festival as actors from *Kargah-e Namayesh* (Theatre Workshop). Ghaffari lives and works in the United States and was also the convener of the ta-ziye programme; Aghdashlou lives and works in the United States and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress (2003). Taslimi lives and works in Sweden and was awarded the Swedish Academy Award (1999) for her role as Medea. Attila Pessyani is based in Iran and is a prominent theatre director and actor. Reza Abdo was an experimental theatre and film director living and working in the United States. Sussan Deyhim is an influential experimental vocalist and musician living and working in the United States.

^{xii} *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1974* Tehran (NIRT) 1974, p. 23.

^{xiii} Julia Kristeva, cited in Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* Cambridge, MA; London (October Books/MIT Press) 1996, p. 153.

^{xiv} Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, MA.; London (October Books/MIT Press) 1996, p. 157.

^{xv} Author's interviews with artist Bijan Saffari and other collaborators, director Arby Ovanessian, academics William Beeman and Peter Chelkowski.

^{xvi} Author's interview with actor and director Nuria Espert.

^{xvii} *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1974*, Tehran (NIRT) 1974, p. 30-31: Antonin Artaud observed Balinese dance at the Paris Colonial Exposition, 1931. This led him to develop theories on theatre that investigated a relationship to signs rather than words. The directors identified a visionary in Artaud, whose purposes were in line with their own.

^{xviii} *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1974*, Tehran (NIRT) 1974, p. 17.

^{xix} Jacques Derrida, 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', in *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, Chicago, 1978, p. 240.

^{xx} Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, London (Routledge) 2005, p. 228.

^{xxi} Participating poet Ted Hughes in A. C. H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, London (Eyre Methuen) 1972, p. 45.

^{xxii} *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis Programme 1974*, Tehran (NIRT) 1974, p. 25.

^{xxiii} The loaded neologism *gharbzadegi* (*westoxification*) was coined as early as 1959 by philosopher and intellectual Ahmad Fardid. A discrediting of those influenced by Western ideas and values formed its ideological bedrock. The term was featured in the new intellectual trajectories of the likes of Jalal Al-e Ahmad (who adopted *gharbzadegi* as the title of his influential book in 1962) and Ali Shariati, both of whom were influenced by revolutionaries such as Frantz Fanon. See Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair*, New York (Cambridge University Press) 2011, who argues that, far from being rooted in indigenous thoughts and native exigencies, *gharbzadegi* can be traced back to the ontology of the Heideggerian critique of man. Fardid, All-Ahmad and Shariati had definitive interests in European thinkers, more so than any indigenous philosophical strands: Al-e Ahmad in Camus and Sartre; Shariati in Heidegger and Sartre; Fardid in Kant and Heidegger. Mirsepassi argues that overt hostility towards the ideas of the West concealed a much deeper, original fascination with them.

^{xxiv} For the Iranian political narrative post 1953 coup, see Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and The Roots of Modern U.S-Iranian Relations*, New York/London (The New Press) 2013.

^{xxv} *Shahbanou* is the Persian title to denote Empress. Farah Diba was also directly linked to the formation of TMOCA. She was patron of many other cultural institutions founded in that era as well as numerous humanitarian organisations.

^{xxvi} Author's interviews with festival organisers including artist Bijan Saffari.

^{xxvii} For more on contemporaneous intellectual discourses, see Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*, New York (Syracuse University Press) 1996; Hamid Dabashi, *Theologies of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Republic*, (Transaction) 2006; Fred Halliday, 'The Iranian Left in International Perspective', in *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left*, Stephanie Cronin (ed.), International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944–), Oct. 2004, Vol. 80, No. 5.

^{xxviii} Temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) as used here is an expression coined by Hakim Bey (alias Peter Lamborn Wilson), the poet and critic who wrote a book by that title. Wilson paid numerous visits to the festival and produced different texts on the content of the projects. He went on to be employed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr at the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy until 1978. For him, the temporary Autonomous zone is a new territory of the moment created on the boundary line of established regions, its focus on the moment being beyond any structured system fuels individual creativity, this chance at creativity that is real empowerment.